

Use of Portable Fire Extinguishers

The following are guidelines for the safe and proper operation of portable, hand-held fire extinguishers. These guidelines are based upon a 10 pound, ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher, typically carried within the patrol units of the Southampton Town Police Department.

NOTE: A portable fire extinguisher is best utilized on an incipient, or small, fire.

DRY CHEMICAL:

Portable dry chemical extinguishers with an ABC rating typically contain monoammonium phosphate. This chemical is non-toxic, but may result in respiratory problems, which would be typical with any type of airborne particulate. Discharge of the extinguisher into a restricted area may result in decreased visibility.

This agent is mixed with small amounts of moisture resistant chemicals which prevents the chemical agent from caking or hardening when not in use.

INSPECTION:

The extinguisher(s) should be given a quick check prior to use. The extinguisher should be accessible at all times. The safety pin should be in place. The cylinder should be free of any dents, rust, etc. The hose or nozzle should be in place and attached, and free of any obstructions. The pressure gauge should indicate that the unit is properly charged. Any indications that the unit is not in proper working order, the extinguisher should be removed from service and exchanged with a similar sized unit. The extinguisher removed from service should be inspected by a qualified inspecting company.

CLASSES OF FIRES:

Fires are categorized into several types. We will only be discussing Class A, B and C.

Class A: Ordinary Combustibles; wood and paper products.

Class B: Flammable liquids; Gasoline, kerosene, etc.

Class C: Electrical fires.

Class A Fires: Ideally, the agent should cover the burning material, thereby smothering it.

Class B Fires: Use caution on flammable liquid fires, as the agent may displace the liquid from its container if it is not carefully discharged. Apply the agent from a point where it is reaching, but not disturbing the fuel.

Class C Fires: Typically, electrical fires are combustible items (Class A or B) burning as a result of exposure to an electrical arc or spark. The dry chemical use in fire extinguishers is non-conductive, and is safe for use on electrical fires.

EXTINGUISHER RATING:

Fire extinguishers are rated by the amount of different types of fire they are capable of extinguishing. A 10 pound dry chemical fire extinguisher typically has a rating of 4A60BC. This indicates the agent stored within is capable of extinguishing a Class A fire of roughly 4 square feet, and a Class B fire of roughly 60 square feet.

STREAM REACH:

Stream reach is the distance an agent will be propelled when discharged. A 10 pound dry chemical extinguisher will have a stream reach of approximately 10 to 15 feet. The extinguisher should last approximately 15-20 seconds of continuous use.

EXTINGUISHER OPERATIONS:

Always start from the windward side of the fire and stand an adequate distance away. Extinguisher use follows the acronym “**P.A.S.S.**”, which stands for; **P**ull, **A**im, **S**queeze and **S**weep.

“**Pull**” the safety pin and hose. Pulling the pin will allow operation of the valve handle.

“**Aim**” the hose or the fixed nozzle.

“**Squeeze**” the valve handle. Depression of the handle unseats the valve stem inside the handle which will allow the propellant to discharge through the valve and out the nozzle and/or hose.

“**Sweep**” the nozzle or hose from side to side.

Aim the extinguisher at the base of the flames and advance if possible as the fire is knocked down. If you run out of agent before the fire is extinguished, retreat to a safe distance or location and await the arrival of the Fire Department.

Fire extinguishers are required to be inspected by a DOT certified inspecting company annually. The Town of Southampton has is under contract with All-Out Fire Equipment.

Once an extinguisher has been used, whether it is empty or not, it should be removed from service and replaced with a fully charged unit.